

Mailing to members U.S. Congress

UNION OF AMERICAN AND JAPANESE PROFESSIONALS AGAINST NUCLEAR OMNICIDE

AMERICAN SECTION

1426 Merritt Drive, El Cajon, California 92020, USA Tel. 714-447-1641

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Please read the two enclosed statements
from the California press.

They document the incredible fact that our
present policy is first-use of the weapons that can
end the world.

They document the equally incredible fact that
the executive branch of our government has acknowledged
that it rejected repeated proposals made by the other
side for a mutual treaty of no-first-use of nuclear
weapons.

The executive branch rejected the proposals
behind closed doors, with no discussion in Congress
and no explanation to the people.

If you want our government to use the omniscidal
weapons first, there is nothing for you to do but remain
silent and wait for the end.

But if omniscide doesn't appeal to you, please
join us in preventive action, including the enclosed
petition to President Reagan to change the first-use
policy.

For human survival,

John Somerville
John Somerville
President

Best regards of John Somerville

CORRESPONDENCE

CORDIAL REPLY TO E.P. THOMPSON'S "LETTER TO AMERICA"

By John Somerville

Of course your book is not anti-American. Every American should read and heed its most timely warnings. It could not fail to make him or her a better American, and he or she would, in the bargain, enjoy your style of writing about the politics of omnicide and anti-omicide. You have a light and personal touch with heavy subjects, and, without losing an iota of dignity or professional responsibility, can show wit, humor, passion, compassion, and the surpassing moral virtue of indignation.

In something by definition so pluralistic as the international peace movement, the functional units of which are organizations, there is of course a sense in which each organization must, in its actions, give priority to that aspect of peace work for which it was created. But this fact should not obviate its giving support and cooperation to any other aspect of the total effort. Peace is a political problem, but peace organizations ought not to relate to one another the way political parties normally do. They ought to relate to one another the way political parties would if they discovered that the hall in which they were carrying on their debates had caught fire and was burning down. What I would like to say in reply to your letter, is, I think, entirely in the spirit of your approach. First, in relation to the role of language.

The central problem is to prevent the universal holocaust called nuclear war. But there has so far been a general failure to notice that calling it "war" is demonstrably incorrect linguistically, and, what is more important, adds greatly to the difficulty of solving the problem. The public and the government suffer from a massive case of linguistic

John Somerville, professor emeritus of philosophy, City University of New York, has participated as author in three of the international projects of UNESCO to strengthen world peace. His books have been widely translated.

self-deception arising from the fact that they have gone on using an old and familiar word—war—to denote a new thing that has a superficial resemblance to the old thing called war, but which in reality has become something as qualitatively different from war as death is from disease.

What we have always called war is understood by everyone as a form of physical combat after which it was always possible to count on the fact that there would be a habitable earth left, together with a majority of the human race. Since nuclear combat can now terminate the human race and render the planet uninhabitable, I propose "omnicide" as a more appropriate name for it. Would it not help all of us, logically and morally, instead of saying "our government is preparing for nuclear war," to say, "our government is preparing for omnicide"? Would the government be inclined to argue that we could win omnicide or that the nation could survive omnicide?

In relation to what the media have muted and suppressed in this country (I wonder whether the same thing took place in yours) the most unforgivable case was the almost complete failure to report the proposals made by the Soviet government (and Warsaw Pact bloc) to the American government (and NATO bloc) for a treaty that neither side would be the first to use nuclear weapons. These proposals were officially and publicly made three times—in 1976, 1979, and 1980—but each time were rejected by the U.S. government behind closed doors, without any discussion in Congress or any explanation to the American people, who are to this day almost wholly unaware that the proposals were ever made.

The acceptance of such a treaty by both superpowers ought to be a political demand of high priority in the peace movement of every country. It is obvious that the very refusal by one superpower to agree to such a treaty when it is proposed by the other will make first-use far more likely than before by increasing tension and multiplying the chances of misunderstanding.

How could such a common-sense proposal, touching an issue so grave as omnicide, be ignored? Only by the cold-war conditioning that endlessly and mindlessly insists nothing good could come from the Soviets. The cold war must be exposed, analyzed, ridiculed, laughed out of court, and driven from the market place by a combination of cognitive and affective means. After all, the Soviets *are* people, and they *do* want to live. But if they are pushed into a corner by the blackmail that demands a choice between surrender or omnicide, they (their government) will choose omnicide just as stupidly as ours would if the Soviets tried omnicidal blackmail on us.

In the thirties when I was a graduate student of social philosophy and societal practice at Columbia I became interested in the Soviet

Union as the largest-scale deliberate societal "experiment" that could be studied at first hand. I learned the language and was given a post-doctoral grant for two years of independent research there. From the beginning of this first-hand Soviet experience I was appalled at the evident scale of the anti-Soviet mythology that was current in the West. Postwar, I tried to be as best I could a bridge between East and West in the interest of human survival.

Speaking affectively, when you know Soviet people as individuals it is impossible not to like them, and equally impossible not to detest the extent to which their acceptance of their own bureaucracy can poison their behavior as human beings. However, that is not the only way people can poison themselves, and a lifetime of international experience has convinced me that the net result is not different elsewhere. In any case, the issue between world peace (human survival) and omnicide will not be decided by individuals as such, but by the policies of the respective bureaucracies. The bottom line is that the Soviet-Warsaw Pact bureaucracy has a peace policy of common sense while the American-NATO bureaucracy has a policy of nuclear omnicide.

A powerful antidote to the cold-war poison is personal contact, discussion, dialogue, and debate with the Soviets. There is no other cognitive way to understand their actual beliefs, and no other affective way to know they are actually human. It was relatively easy to convince members of the American Philosophical Association of this, but I had to argue a full year with the U.S. Department of State before it would allow Soviet philosophers to come here and present papers at annual meetings of our national Association. After we broke the ice in 1962, other disciplines followed suit; later, regular exchanges of professors and students were arranged through annual governmental agreements which, by the way, are now threatened with curtailment by the Reagan administration, *déjà vu* in all its aspects.

I found it possible also to arrange programs of dialogue and debate with the Soviets at the World Congresses of Philosophy. You may be interested to know that the Proceedings volume, *Soviet Marxism and Nuclear War: An International Debate*, consisting of the papers and discussion in the Special Colloquium I chaired at the XVth World Congress of Philosophy, has just been published here by Greenwood Press. In this extended debate, the first of its kind, the leading Soviet paper was presented by the Vice President of their Academy of Sciences who made clear they would choose omnicide rather than surrender.

But to awaken the general public, the need and the way to prevent omnicide have to be presented affectively as well as cognitively. Since the best known and most powerful of affective symbols are Hiroshima and Nagasaki—what our government did to them—I proposed to the

Japanese a binational Union of American and Japanese Professionals Against Nuclear Omnicide, now established. My documentary play, *The Crisis: True Story About How the World Almost Ended*, based on the memoir (death-bed confession?) of Robert Kennedy, dramatizes the fact that the first deliberate decision of any nuclear power to end the human world was made by the American government in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. The TV spectacular called *Missiles of October*, which appeared *after* the play (and reappears each October), falsifies history and contradicts Robert Kennedy's own account, as the footnote documentation in *The Crisis* demonstrates. John and Robert Kennedy admittedly "expected" from nuclear war waged against the USSR nothing less than "the end of mankind" (their own words). The end didn't come then only because the Soviets *unexpectedly* obeyed the ultimatum to remove their missile bases from Cuba unilaterally—without any reciprocal removal of our missile bases from Turkey. This omnicidal blackmail thenceforth became the model for U.S. foreign policy. (Witness the public declarations of Defense Secretary Schlesinger in 1975 that, "under no circumstances could we disavow the first use of nuclear weapons," and of President Carter at the UN in 1977 that the United States would use them first if any attack, even with "conventional" weapons, were made against us "or our allies.") The play has been staged so far only in Sweden and Japan (where it sold 50,000 copies in three months). As no American publisher would touch it, I myself have had it printed and circulated here, where it has been rather widely used as study material in university courses.

Our primary task in peace education is to make the known truth credible to the people who elect governments. If governments then refuse to carry out the will to live of the people who elected them, the people must be reminded that they themselves are the court of last resort and final responsibility, as I pointed out (by quoting the American Declaration of Independence) in *The Peace Revolution: Ethos and Social Process*. It then becomes not only the "right" of the people, but, according to the Declaration, their "duty" to "throw off such government" and replace it with one that will respect their "inalienable right to life," on which all else depends.

Legislative Counsel
State of California
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Sir:

As registered voters of the state of California, we respectfully request your assistance in accordance with the directive appearing on page 1 of the booklet, California Ballot Initiatives, Revised Nov. 1982, Prepared by the Secretary of State, as follows.

"The first step in the process of qualifying an initiative is to write the text of the proposed law. The measure's proponents may obtain assistance from the Legislative Counsel in drafting the measure in some cases. To do so, the proponents must present the idea for the law to the Legislative Counsel, and the request for a draft of the proposed law must be signed by 25 or more electors. The Legislative Counsel will then draft the proposed law if he determines that there is a reasonable probability that the measure will eventually be submitted to the voters. (Government Code 10243)"

Our idea in relation to the 1984 state elections is in some respects similar to that of the "nuclear freeze" initiative of 1982. It is that the Governor of California should transmit to the President of the United States a letter informing him that the expressed will of the electorate of California is for an immediate declaration by the President that the United States will not be first to use nuclear weapons.

Please accept our collective thanks for your assistance in this matter.

Please address your response to Dr. John Somerville,
El Cajon, CA 92020.

Sir

Name (print)

Name (sign)

Address (print)

Phone

*Daniel — This letter starts the legal ball rolling.
If you agree with it, keep this copy, and
sign, fill in and return the other copy to
me. Best regards — John*